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ABSTRACT

Santa Barbara City College recently established a tutorial center to serve the needs of educationally disadvantaged students, particularly those with minority backgrounds. To investigate the impact ot these services, the performance and persistence of 75 students enrolled in a preparatory English course were studied. Each section was taught by the same instructor using similar techniques, and students were free to choose whether or not they wished to seek tutorial assistance. At the end of the semester, 63 per cent of the students completed the course. This compares favorably with the previous 65 per cent course-completion rate. Of the 65 students enrolled beyond the fifth week, none of the 24 who received tutorial assistance withdrew, as compared with a withdrawal rate of 59 per cent for the 41 non-tutored students. Contrasting prior performance of tutored and non-tutored students in terms of cumulative GPA's, it was found that the lower his prior GPA, the less likely the student was to take advantage of the tutoring service. Performance on a standardized reading achievement test (SRA Reading Record) showed almost identical grade level gains for both tutored and non-tutored students. In conclusion, the impact of this tutorial program on performance and persistence has been positive, with noteworthy effects on persistence. [Because of marginal reproducibility of original, this document is not available in hard copy.] (JO)

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SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

RESEARCH REPORT 13-70

AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE IN ENGLISH 42: PERFORMANCE AND PERSISTENCE AMONG LOW ACHIEVING STUDENTS

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Background

The $29,000 Alquist Bill (SB164) funding awarded to Santa Barbara City College in February, 1970 made it possible to establish a tutorial center to serve the needs of educationally disadvantaged students, particularly among the racial and ethnic minorities. The two target classes for the tutorial center were English 42, Preparatory English for Reading and Writing, and Math 1, Basic Mathematics. Both courses are designed especially to serve the needs of students whose test scores indicate that additional preparation is necessary in basic skills. Typically, students enrolling in the two classes have SCAT scores in the lowest 20 percent, compared with national freshman norms. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of tutorial services on the performance and persistence of English 42 students.

The Sample

Seventy-five students enrolled for the English 42 Class in the Spring, 1970 Semester. All three sections were taught by the same instructor, Mr. Royce Adams. All three sections were presented course objectives, and there was discussion of structuring the course in the most effective way possible to allow students to meet the objectives of the course. Mr. Adams met class one hour per week in a formal presentation, and invited tutors to work individually with students in class on the other two scheduled class days. Students were free to work at their own pace, and could choose whether they wanted to work with a tutor or not. Both Mr. Adams and the tutors made themselves available outside of class time to provide further individual help to students requesting it.

The persistence and performance history of the entire group is shown below as Table 1.

Table 1
Persistence and Performance of 75 Enrolled English 42 Students

N	%	Group
75	100.00%	Original roster
10	13.33%	Withdrew or were re-assigned during first 5 weeks
24	32.00%	Withdrew during the rest of the semester
*41	*63.07%	Completed C or better

*(of 65 persisting beyond 5 weeks)

The gross persistence rate for the entire group of 75 was 54.67%; nearly half of the students whose names appeared on the original roster did not complete the semester. Given the policy of re-assigning students to more advanced courses early in the semester, and recognizing that 5 students completely failed to attend, a more realistic gross persistence figure would be 63.06%. Prior enrollment figures from 1968-69 and Fall, 1969 suggest that about 65% of the students who enroll for English 42 are likely to complete the course.

Differences between tutored and non-tutored students: Persistence and Performance

Persistence

Of the 65 students enrolled beyond the fifth week, 24 (36.94%) received tutorial assistance from the center directed by Mr. Jackman LeBlanc. The comparison of persistence among tutored and non-tutored students is given in Table 2.

Table 2
Persistence: Tutored vs Non-Tutored Students

Group	N	Withdrawals	%
Non-Tutored	41	24	58.53%
Tutored	24	0	0%
TOTAL	65	24	36.94%

It is obvious that the difference in persistence between the two groups is dramatic! More than half of the non-tutored students withdrew, as compared with none of the tutored. The withdrawal pattern is more important than these figures would indicate: the more serious fact is that over 70% of the non-persisting students withdrew entirely from college, not from the English 42 course alone.

Given the disadvantaged background of the majority of these students, the efficacy of a tutorial assistance program in allowing students the extra help and individual attention to remain in college appears to be supported by the persistence data for this group of students.

Performance

Class Grades and College Grades

A cross-tabulation was made to show the differences in distribution of awarded grades and W grades for tutored and non-tutored students. The results appear as Table 3.

Table 3
Awarded Grades and W's for
Tutored vs Non-Tutored Students

Group	A	B	C	D	W
Tutored	2	11	11	0	0
Non-Tutored	2	7	8	0	24

Mean GPA Tutored: 2.62
Mean GPA Non-Tutored (excluding W): 2.64

As an assessment of the prior performance of all enrolled students, cumulative GPA's were taken from the transcripts of all 75 enrolling students. Although 16 students had no prior or cumulative GPA's (they had withdrawn completely from college

during the Spring, and completed no prior units), a comparison between tutored and non-tutored students was possible for 61 students. The comparison is given as Table 4.

Table 4
Cumulative GPA: Tutored vs Non-Tutored

Group	N	Mean GPA (Cum)
Tutored	22	2.25
Non-Tutored Persist.	17	2.03
Non-Tutored Withdrawals	20	1.69
All Non-Tutored	(37)	(1.85)

The table suggests that students who did not take advantage of tutorial assistance had a prior record of lower academic achievement than their peers who used the tutoring service. Under the conditions of the current study, which were not experimental, since tutoring was equally available to all, there is no way of knowing whether motivational factors which might have been associated with a history of low achievement might also have prevented the same students from seeking additional help with their assignments.

For those who persisted through the course, the evidence suggests that there were no significant differences in performance of course objectives by tutored vs non-tutored students (Table 3).

Reading Performance

Reading achievement was tested using a standardized reading test (the S.R.A. Reading Record). The tutored and non-tutored were significantly different at the beginning of the course ($t = 3.44$, P. .01): lower reading achievement students were given more encouragement to take advantage of tutoring, although not all did so. The comparison of pre-test, post-test and gains for the two groups is given in Table 5.

Table 5
Pre-Test, Post-Test and Gains
for Tutored vs Non-Tutored Students

	Grade Level			Grade Level		
Group	N	Pre-Test $\bar{X}$	S.D.	Post-Test $\bar{X}$	S.D.	Gain
Tutored	24	7.64	2.1	9.9	2.4	2.30 < .001
Non-Tutored	17	9.39	2.9	12.22	2.5	2.78 < .001

The significance of gains for the two groups was measured using a statistic suggested by Hays, following the formula:

$$t = \frac{M_D - E(M_D)}{\text{est } M_D}$$

where $$M_D = \frac{\sum D_i^2}{N}$$

$$\text{and} \qquad S_D^2 = \frac{\sum_i D_i^2}{N} - M_D^2$$

For the tutored group, t = 9.02, with 23 degrees of freedom, and was significant at the .001 level. For the non-tutored group T = 7.04 with 16 degrees of freedom; significant at the .00a level.

Comment on Performance

The class grade was in part determined by performance on the reading achievement test, so Tables 3,4, and 5 above are essentially different aspects of the same general finding. The evidence suggests that there was no difference in class performance between tutored and non-tutored students who completed the course. Although tutored students started significantly lower in grade level achievement in reading, both groups tended to gain over two grade levels in reading performance during the course. The lower beginning and ending for tutored students may in part reflect the problem of cultural bias of standardized testing: 33% of the tutored were bilingual speakers of English and Spanish, and none of the non-tutored students were bilingual in these languages. The same language achievement weaknesses, however, are likely to be reflected in performance in all academic courses, so the tests are likely to be of reasonable use.

Student Reactions to the Course

Forty-four students responded to an opionnaire on the effectiveness of various aspects of the course. The questions were asked at mid-semester, and the students responded anonymously. A summary of responses is given in percentages below. Not every student answered every question, so the totals aren't always 100%.

Questions on objectives

Do you feel that you understand the course objectives for the reading section of the course?

Yes 86% No 14%

Do you feel that you understand the course objectives for the writing section of the course?

Yes 77% No 7%

Do you feel that the objectives are two difficult/easy?

Too difficult 36% O.K. 48% Too easy 9%

Questions on tutors/tutoring

Do you feel that having tutors available to help you with your work is worthwhile?

Yes 93% No 7% ("I want to accomplish goals on my own".)

Do you like the way the course is organized with one day for class lecture and two days with independent work on your objectives?

Yes 95% No 2%

Questions on the instructor

Do you feel the instructor really wants to help you improve your basic skills?

Yes 100%

Do you feel you would benefit more from class if the instructor lectured more?

Yes 32% No 55% Don't Know 13%

Do you feel you are learning anything worthwhile or helpful to you?

Yes 100%

While generally supportive as might be expected, the students' responses, in conjunction with their subsequent performance and persistence, suggests the value of: 1) stating and sharing behavioral objectives for the course with students; 2) providing a flexible schedule to allow students to work more independently with tutors or with the instructor; 3) providing tutorial assistance to the slow-achieving students in English 42.

The findings suggest the particular value of tutoring assistance in the area of persistence. The sense that another student is concerned enough to help reinforces the effectiveness of the teaching approach adopted in English 42.

Further experimentation is being conducted during the summer session among students in a special summer readiness program. In addition to receiving tutoring in English 42, the students are being provided financial assistance and transportation allowances. A number of the students (26) are employed by Neighborhood Youth Corps funding, and are being given interest and aptitude tests to prepare them better for fall: a psychiatric social worker is conducting a group for students seeking additional help with specific problems related to attitudes about school. An evaluation of the summer program will be more extensive than this preliminary report or the effectiveness of the tutorial aspect of the Learning Resources Center.

One thing is clear: the difference in persistence among students who are shown that others care and can help is sufficient evidence to suggest further exploration of the tutorial concept for disadvantaged students.